

ABSTRACT of the disclosure

Method and apparatus for establishing restricted broadcast groups in a switched network. The method assigns different virtual LAN identifiers (VLAN-IDs) to different subsets of associated end systems or access ports. Tables are maintained for mapping the VLAN-IDs with associated end systems and access ports. When a broadcast packet is received at a first switch, it is encapsulated with a VLAN header, including the VLAN-IDs, and sent out a multicast channel to all other switches in the network (domain). The original packet is sent out the other access ports of the receiving switch for the designated VLAN-IDs. The switches receiving the VLAN packet remove the header and send the original packet out access ports associated with the VLAN-IDs extracted from the header. The method provides a mechanism for forwarding broadcast packets of a protocol not supported by the switching mechanism, as well as multicast packets and unicast packets from undiscovered end systems.

[illegible]